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ABSTRACT

Summarized are six individual panel presentations focusing on critical variables in mainstreaming the hearing impaired child. (LS)

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SUMMARY Winifred Northcott, Chairperson

Edwin Martin, Deputy Commissioner, Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, has stated that the focus today is on a system of educational services to appropriately serve all children.

The emphasis is on appropriately and all, and Dr. Martin reinforces this by his statement that "equality does not mean sameness...it means appropriateness." For some children, the least restrictive environment is the self-contained class. The question is...for which children?

One by one, individual panel members have contributed dimensions to the concept of a systems approach to mainstreaming certain hearing impaired children of preschool and school age. They have given the conceptual framework within which certain activities must occur:

- written criteria for placement..continuation... demission
- multidisciplinary team to serve the child and family
- due process procedures as routine and integral
- acoustic environment in regular classes which stimulates optimum learning and listening
- support services offered by specialists with competencies entitling them to the role and function as itinerant teacher; resource room specialist; educational audiologist; speech clinician; diagnostic/prescriptive teacher; social worker; psychologist; health representative

Patricia Kennedy, through a description of research data gathered on children with severe and profound hearing loss who were found in regular classrooms in grades 3,4,5 following an auditory/oral intervention program during the infant/preschool years, gave evidence that given an intact sensorineural system, it is possible for such children to not only be integrated, but assimilated. However, not all children with similar characteristics are realistic

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candidates for regular classroom placement. The unanswered question "Who pays?" for tuition of a hearing impaired child in a regular nursery, as an integral component of a comprehensive preschool program, leads one to examination of the amendments to special education laws, the pattern of state special education aids, and the minimum standards enforced by the Department of Education in the particular state in which you work.

Donald McGee addresses to the cascade of services which must be available options for children, and reminds us that fluidity of movement from one setting to another, as the child's changing needs dictate, is critical to individualization of programming.

Irene Kilpatrick identified the separate but equal role and functions of the speech clinician and the itinerant teacher of the deaf. The former addressing to speech, hearing, and language stimulation, the latter specialist focusing on the academic content being presented in the regular classroom and previewing/reviewing the basic concepts presented by the general educator, the regular classroom teacher.

Gloria Matter described the characteristics of hearing impaired students entering high school. One subpopulation is academically oriented, capable of being assimilated in regular classes, receiving their information basically through the main stream, along with hearing peers. For a second group, the mainstay of learning is the resource teacher, who must address to the mores and dreams of youth as well as to the material covered in text books of the regular classes in which they are placed part-time.

Mark Ross offered very poignant evidence of the wide range of capability of individual hearing impaired students to realistically function in a regular classroom, due to the quality of acoustic conditions within that setting.

Joanne Schwartzberg's provocative statements challenge us to examine whether we are addressing to the total child, his sense of well-being as well as his language learning and cognitive development.

One wag has said, "Just as I think I know all the answers, they change the questions." Previously, the simplistic question was continually being asked, "Which method do you favor...oral or total communication?" and the answer is always, "For which child?"

Currently, the burning question is, "Are you for mainstreaming or not?" and again, the response must be, "For which child?"

But the climate is changing, and there are new angles to consider in examination of old questions. Parents are assuming a participatory management role in major educational decisions affecting their child. They will not permit all children to be programmed alike, and are insisting on additional personnel to permit partial or full time regular classroom placement. They are also insisting that children capable of being educated in an auditory/oral or visual/oral method of instruction receive their education in a classroom separate from a classroom of children who require the additional components of fingerspelling and signs. Parents are insisting that equally competent teachers, but with different preservice and professional experiences, be available to serve these separate, but equal, groups.....and that a monitoring system is well established to insure a change in educational setting if appropriate.

We need to ask ourselves the question....education, to what end? In the year 2,000 there must be critical thinking, critical evaluation, common sense ...each quality developed through a coordinated home/school effort. There will, of course, be education for skill training or higher education placement as well.

Additional questions must be asked as well. Who exercises the leadership function in a school system? Who presents the case for mainstreaming? The concept is valid, the presenting evidence in child skills is clearly available...but the budget required for implementation; the workshops, professional growth program; the shift in physical facilities and reallocation of activities during a professional work week must be described to policy-makers in a convincing way. The individual bearing the title Coordinator/Supervisor of the Program for the Hearing Impaired in a district or cooperative

must hold a position on the Table of Organization which enables him/her to be in the room where priorities are determined and budgets re-examined for presentation to the Board of Education.

Edward Zigler, of Yale, in Congressional testimony recently testified to the concepts of normalization and deinstitutionalization. These concepts are little more than slogans," he said, "badly in need of an empirical base." Then he added, "The only antidote we have to moving from fad to fad is careful research and evaluation efforts."

We have a paucity of resarch evidence relating to children placed in regular classrooms following early auditory/oral intervention during the preschool years. Since a large percentage of preschool programs are funded in part or wholly through federal monies, a research component must be included for longitudinal and cross-sectional studies.

The assumption throughout the morning has been that the child who is integrated can speak for himself and that his speech is intelligible. The assumption has been that certain children can be integrated at the kindergarten/first grade levels; others are candidates for third-fourth grade integrated settings; a third group, at the junior or senior high school level.

What of the hearing impaired child who relies primarily on the signed and fingerspelled word for educational information? What research data is available for this population who are sometimes found in a regular classroom with a manual interpreter? What of the oral student who is visually oriented and for whom there is still the missing link of an oral interpreter as supplement to note taker? To what extent can the regular classroom teacher be expected to modify the "normal" action in the classroom...for herself and the rest of her class?

In summary, the child....not the method...is our focus. The child... not the setting...is our concern. The accommodation must be made by adults in his environment. Role change....role specialization... individualized programming...support specialists....additional educational settings....psycho-social aspects of integration as well as academic progress.... the critical variables are legion.but not in writing.